

PRIZES TO FIREMEN FOR IDEAS THAT HELP SERVICE

Deputy Chief Maher Will Get New Administration Medal for His Rating System.

WHEN on Saturday next, Mayor Mitchell or his representative pins the new administration medal of the Fire Department on the coat of Deputy Chief Patrick Maher, his act will signalize the success of Fire Commissioner Robert Adamson's experiment in running the department with the aid of its 5,000 uniformed men.

Last summer Mr. Adamson invited the entire 5,000 to come in and help him to manage the department, offering a medal to the man who turned in the best suggestion. The result was that the officers and firemen sent in such a flood of ideas that the Commissioner cannot find the time to put them all into practice.

It was the Commissioner's idea that the army of trained and practical men under him must, as a matter of course, have a wealth of ideas based upon experience which it would be extremely useful to him to have. He found, however, that a sort of Chinese wall separated the men from the Commissioner in the form of an ancient rule forbidding any member of the force from communicating with the Commissioner or the chief except after submitting an application in writing to his immediate superior and having it come all the way up through official channels.

The new plan of admitting firemen into the management of the department has created a revolution in the department. It has stimulated the capable and ambitious men in the department as nothing has done in years. The hardest job of all was determining which, of all the multitude of suggestions sent in, was the best. The choice finally fell upon the suggestion of Chief Maher for a plan of discriminating between good and bad firemen by installing a system of working records.

Before the adoption of the suggestion of Deputy Chief Maher there was no way of distinguishing between the work of the worst and of the best firemen, as it was customary to give awards only for life saving. Often the best firemen in the service entered promotion examinations upon the same footing as firemen who did not perform their duties with the enthusiasm the service required. Great difficulties stood in the way of equitable adjustment in ratings on merit.

By Deputy Chief Maher's plan, developed and improved by the officials and officers of the Fire Department appointed by the Commissioner, a scheme was evolved whereby credit or merit ratings are to be made only upon a definite statement of facts, not opinions, of the company commanders. Indorsed by the battalion and deputy chiefs and passed upon by a board of service records, composed of officials of the Fire Department appointed by the Fire Commissioner, the findings of this board are to form a permanent part of the official record of the Fire Department, and when men enter civil service promotion examinations due credit will be allowed on their papers for the awards issued by this board.

The great value of this suggestion lies in the increased stimulus it will give to the entire force and the definite incentive which it offers to every man to win recognition for excellent fire service. It was considered by the Fire Commissioner and his advisers as the best suggestion brought forward and most deserving of the medal. It will go into effect on July 1.

Chief Maher has been a member of the Fire Department nearly thirty years and during that time has taken part in many of New York's most serious fires. For a number of years he

was stationed in the lower part of Manhattan and has seen strenuous fire duty in the financial section. His name appeared on the roll of merit of 1903 as having rescued with two other firemen Capt. Collins of Engine Company 10 from the hold of a burning ship at Pier 15, East River.

Another important proposal, and one which has been put into immediate effect, was that advanced by Capt. Charles E. Field of Hook and Ladder Company 107. Capt. Field proposed that uniformed men should be drilled in various physical exercises in order to keep them constantly fit for their work. He has long been interested in athletics and was one of the first members of the Brighton Athletic Club.

Capt. Field was born in New York in 1869 and entered the department January 17, 1891. He was attached to Hook and Ladder Company 107 when he met with a disastrous accident. He was acting as tillerman one night and responding to an alarm when in crossing the Long Island Railroad tracks his truck was struck by a locomotive and he was so severely injured that one of his arms and all of his toes on one foot had to be amputated. He was in such good physical condition, however, that he was back at work in the department within three months. Owing to his severe injuries he was detailed to clerical work at Brooklyn headquarters.

He subsequently became inspector of forage, fuel, gas and electricity and had charge of the hospital and training stables for horses. He was one of the first to suggest that the department set its own horsehoeing.

Capt. Field attributes his remarkable recovery from his accident to the physical exercise in which he was interested and at which he was an adept at that time. In a letter which he wrote to the Commissioner with reference to his proposed exercises he said:

"It is one of the most essential qualifications required for members in this department to render good service at all times to have a regular daily athletic drill in company quarters under the direction of company commander at such time as the officer may designate, dumbbell exercise, parallel bars, &c., tending to develop muscle and strengthen physical condition to combat with the severe strain attending work at fire."

"On entering the department the men have practiced and must pass the athletic examination required, but after appointment the training stops and the men put on extra weight. The older men are considerably overweight for their height and care very little for any exercise or additional work, consequently the Fire Department is not using or developing their physical strength in keeping the men in condition for any emergency, and as the most important duty is rescuing life, men ought to be in the best possible active physical condition."

The suggestion made by Capt. Field was put into effect in the early part of May and was a pronounced success from its inception. Certain difficulties as to the best method of conducting the work, of course, had to be overcome. To teach calisthenic exercises to 5,000 men required no little organization.

A certain number of men were carefully selected by chief officers from each company and required to report for instruction at the West Side Young Men's Christian Association, Manhattan. These men were put through a rigorous course of drill and thoroughly instructed in the various exercises. After becoming efficient drillmasters

themselves they were assigned to various companies and are now carrying out the daily exercises with excellent results.

Fire Commissioner Adamson issued a set of instructions to the force in the form of a letter, which was incorporated in a drill book illustrated with various drawings. Among other things the Commissioner said:

"The object of these exercises is to keep the men in as good physical condition as when they came into the department. We have a large number of companies where the work is not sufficient to give the men the exercise they need, the runs being less than one a day on the average.

"In these companies the men are apt to become soft, take on surplus weight and become too girthy. This is a bad thing for men who have to do the active work that firemen have to do—climb ladders, carry hose over high roofs, work in smoke and heat and frequently save life under circumstances requiring the highest physical skill and endurance.

"The exercises are the simple 'setting up' exercises such as are used at West Point, in the National Guard and by many athletic instructors. The best in a number of physical manuals has been adopted and adapted to the use of these members of this department. Fifteen minutes a day are to be devoted to practicing the exercises. The company commanders are expected to see that the exercises are regularly carried out, except when the men are fatigued from fire duty when the exercise hour arrives."

Incorporated in the drill book on calisthenics, 7,500 of which were distributed, were also a number of instructions on first aid, artificial respiration, wounds, fractures and hygiene.

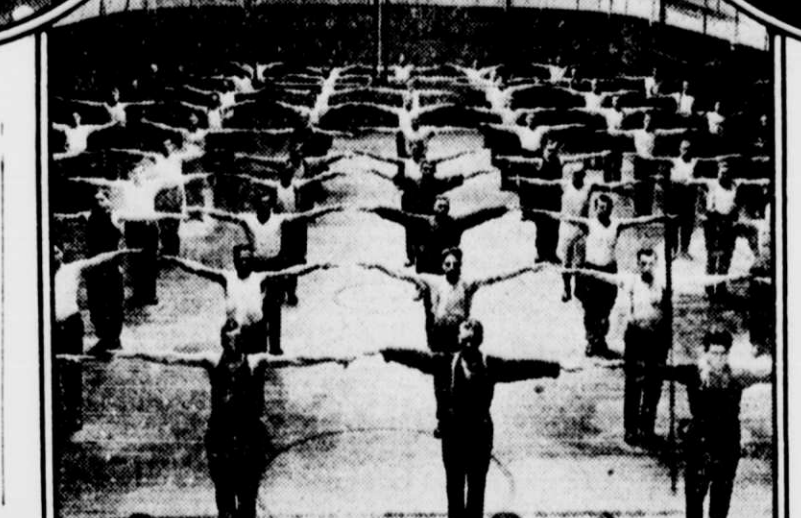
From the outset the calisthenic exercises "loosened up" a number of men who had become unused to exercise, not so much perhaps from a fault of their own as from being members of engine companies which did not have a large number of fire calls to answer. A number of men who had taken on flesh have already reduced their weight, and while there are a few perhaps on whom the exercises are somewhat of a hardship, the majority are being vastly benefited. The instructors were required to do an hour's drill twice a week until they learned their parts thoroughly and of course the exercises fell more heavily upon them than upon the others; but the firemen are only required to devote fifteen minutes a day to this work.

The third suggestion which ranked highest in the estimation of the Commissioner and his committee was that



Capt. Albert Reid.

Capt. Charles E. Field, Hook and Ladder Company 107.



Uniformed firemen at calisthenic exercises. One of the suggestions made by Capt. Field. Above—Deputy Chief Patrick Maher, whose idea won the department medal.

made by Capt. Albert Reid of Engine Company No. 73. This was a method for preventing the freezing of hydrants in the winter time. Capt. Reid hit upon the idea accidentally.

He was inspecting storage and refrigerating plants in his neighborhood and found that by the use of calcium chloride in the hydrants they could be made to stand a greater degree of cold than ordinarily. A series of experiments conducted by the Fire Department during the last two months of the winter confirmed Capt. Reid's judgment in this matter and his idea will be further experimented with during the coming winter.

If his plan works out it will be an immense relief to firemen who have to fight fires in cold weather. Owing to the freezing of hydrants the firemen have to be sent constantly through the streets to inspect them, and in the coldest weather fire engines have to be sent out to thaw out the pipes. It frequently happens that firemen are delayed in their work at a fire by frozen hydrants and consequently the fire damage is greatly increased.

Capt. Reid has been in the department since January 27, 1891, and was for eight years supervising engineer under Chief Croker. He has, during the past two or three years, given up a great deal of his spare time to the study of chemistry with a view to improving his status in the department.

The three suggestions outlined above were selected from a vast number, many men in the department even making two or three suggestions, all of a more or less practical value. Some of the proposals were unique in character. Selecting va-

rious suggestions at random, the following deserve mention: Seneca Larkie, Jr., engineer of steamer, Engine Company 20, suggested that oil be used for fuel in fire engines. He maintains that the advantage of this plan would be to save great expense now incurred in maintaining a system of fuel supply wagons, to say nothing of the economy in fuel itself.

Fireman John J. McCarthy 2d of Engine Company 88 proposed that firemen attending the Fire College should receive a course in fire prevention.

Capt. John Conway of Engine Company 233, among other proposals of value, suggested that buildings be equipped with outside sprinklers along the edge of the cornice. These could be used for protecting buildings against fires in adjoining property.

Capt. Leland D. Potter of Engine Company 286 proposed an improvement in the Fire College courses by opening the automobile school to captains and lieutenants, giving them a full course in the operation and care of motor apparatus.

Lieut. Thomas O'Connor, Engine Company 27, made a practicable suggestion for assisting the giving of fire alarms in places where boxes are out of order. He proposed that signs be furnished to each company to be attached to each alarm box in the district reading "Telephone out of order. Use telephone box attached to send in alarm" that telephone boxes be attached to all telegraph boxes and connected directly to the Fifty-eighth street station, so that when company commanders receive notice that the telegraph is broken down they can send men out

over the wires with these signs.

An interesting suggestion came from Engineer of Searchlight 3, John J. Bowen, who said that engines often become charged with electricity because of steam escaping through a small outlet of office, and he proposed a remedy for this condition by placing some metal object on the engine and letting it hang to the ground so that the electricity will be conducted to the earth. Engineer Bowen made a number of other suggestions along technical lines.

Engineers of steamers Lucien Du Flon and Francis J. Sample suggested that fire houses and school buildings in close proximity should be heated by the same plant.

Fireman Robert J. Evans of Engine Company 259, among other suggestions, proposed that all buildings should have a valve supply by means of which the gas supply could be cut off. This would materially assist in fire fighting and preventing explosions. Another one of Fireman Evans's ideas was that inspectors should appraise the contents of all buildings insured above a certain amount. Still another suggestion was that owners of vacant lots be required to keep their property free from fire breeding material.

Fireman Kurt Fuchel of Engine Company 29 suggested that all men should be assigned to companies located in the so-called busy districts, and after from three to five years service there should be transferred at their own suggestion.

Fireman John B. Corriean suggested that all alarm boxes be fitted with a siren horn or some device which would start sounding the moment the handle was turned and would keep sounding until the alarm was actually turned in. The object of this idea being to prevent the mistakes which now occur when persons not familiar with the fire alarm boxes do not operate them correctly.

Fireman Charles H. Bartelle suggested that all subway stations be furnished with portable electric fans equipped with 200 feet of flexible cord, so that firemen fighting fire in the subway could use these fans for the purpose of driving the smoke ahead of them. He also suggested that the subway be provided with independent electric power for use in case of a breakdown.

Lieut. William Willmott of Engine Company 222 seems to think that the firemen at present do not have sufficient power in inspecting buildings, and proposed that all firemen be detailed to inspection work should have police powers.

Fireman Benjamin Silverstein, Engine Company 37, suggested that

Success of Plan Shown in Great Number of Valuable Improvements Suggested by the Men

fire extinguishers be installed on every other floor of apartment and tenement houses.

Engineer of steamer John T. Lennahan, Engine Company 8, proposed that a diagram be kept in the hallways of buildings having cellars and subcellars, so that in case of fire the chief officer could see at a glance where to find stairways, interior openings, &c. He said that he was present at the fire where Chief Kruger lost his life and that had such a diagram been in use at the time the chief might not have fallen through the stair opening to his death.

The following list comprises the names of those whom the Fire Commissioner and his committee deemed most worthy of mention in connection with the administration medal: Capt. Leland D. Potter, Engine Company 286; Capt. John Conway, Engine Company 233; Capt. William Dugan, Engine Company 49; Lieut. James J. Mella, Engine Company 263; Lieut. Patrick J. Sullivan 6, Hook and Ladder Company 3; Lieut. William F. Meester, Engine Company 244; Lieut. Magnus Storch, Hook and Ladder Company 107; Lieut. Thomas O'Connor, Engine Company 27; Engineer of steamer Seneca Larkie, Jr., Engine Company 20; Engineer of steamer John F. Lennahan, Engine Company 8; Engineer of steamer Lucien Du Flon, Engine Company 237; Engineer of steamer John J. Fell, Engine Company 69; Engineer of steamer Francis J. Sample, Engine Company 7; Engineer of steamer John J. Bowen, Searchlight 3.

Large numbers of suggestions were of a more or less technical character which, while of interest to experts, would not exactly appeal to the public.

The great advantage derived from this whole movement inaugurated by the Fire Commissioner was the stimulating of the mentality of the members of the uniformed force. They were encouraged to give their best efforts in thinking of what would improve their work just as men in the great manufacturing plants are encouraged to give their best efforts to the corporations which employ them.

Though this is the first year of the administration medal, Fire Commissioner Adamson has been gratified at the results and the interest shown by the men and officers of the Fire Department. The administration medal is a democratic affair, as it is competed for not only by the officers but also by the men.

GIVING TIME TO SAVE TIME.

"I don't see the few minutes a lot of office employees lose by coming to the office late at more or less frequent intervals that does harm," said a Madison Square employer of twenty or more young women, cloth storekeepers. "It is the bad start they get and the discouragement, many times, of the day's work."

"I used to have a system of fines, as most offices do, but really I felt kind of ashamed of myself for taking money from girls who were not getting any too much anyhow, and I began to look out for something better. I've got it now, and ever since it has been in operation I find matters running much more smoothly and I've got rid of the firing unpleasantness."

"Our plan is to allow each employee who is never late—we begin at 8:20—

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one day a month. That day is here to do with as she pleases, and while most of them use it in doing personal work at home they might otherwise have time for many of them make a real holiday and rest of it in going away on Saturday at noon, or quit at noon on Saturdays and remaining in the country or somewhere with friends until Monday night.

"I like them to do that, because two days and a half out of town every month is a mighty good thing for their general energy and health. In the summer time nearly all of them make that sort of combination for an outing."

"Of course some girls will be late no matter what reward for promptness is offered, and when we have one who is chronically tardy we give her all the days in the month and let some of the late ones go. That may not effect a radical cure, but it does as far as we are concerned."

"No, I don't suppose we ever had an employee who lost by tardiness as much as eight hours a month, and we are saving more than that for her, but we are saving it by getting a good start every day and by the improved spirit of the girls as a result of the day that is all theirs."

Wanted Son, Wouldn't Care for Daughter.

BROOKLYN, Dec. 6, 1914. That she wanted a son and not a girl was the reason given by Mrs. Elias Lamm of Brooklyn why she did not care for her three-year-old daughter and her separation from her husband. Both father and mother asked that the child be committed to the care of the Children Aid Society and sent to a home, and this the court ordered.

ARTIST'S IMPRESSIONS OF A SIGHTSEEING TOUR ON THE FIFTH AVENUE BUS

